

Catalogue

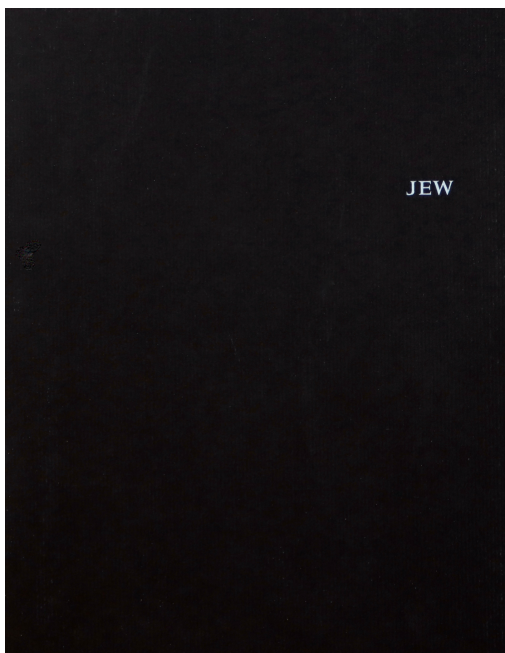
Jew

William Anastasi

This catalogue accompanies *Jew*, a painting by William Anastasi produced in connection with his exhibition at Stalke Galleri in 1997. The publication centers on Anastasi's use of language as a conceptual and material presence, focusing on a single word rendered with restraint and precision.

Jew exemplifies Anastasi's long-standing engagement with chance, rules, and the dematerialization of the artwork, while confronting language as a historically charged and culturally loaded sign. The work resists illustration or narrative, instead allowing meaning to emerge through confrontation, ambiguity, and reflection.

The catalogue includes a text by Thomas McEvilley, who situates Anastasi's work within the broader context of conceptual art and the history of language in visual practice. McEvilley addresses how words, once excluded from modernist visual art, re-enter artistic discourse as objects of thought rather than mere carriers of information.



William Anastasi's Painting of the word "JEW"

Produced In the Connection to his exhibition by Stalke Galleri 1997

Stalke Edition/Stalke Out Of Space, and Sander Gering Gallery, Printed in Denmark, October 1997.

Design: Dove Bradshaw and Preform.

Text by: Thomas McEvilley

Produced By Stalke Galleri and Sandra Gerring Gallery, New York

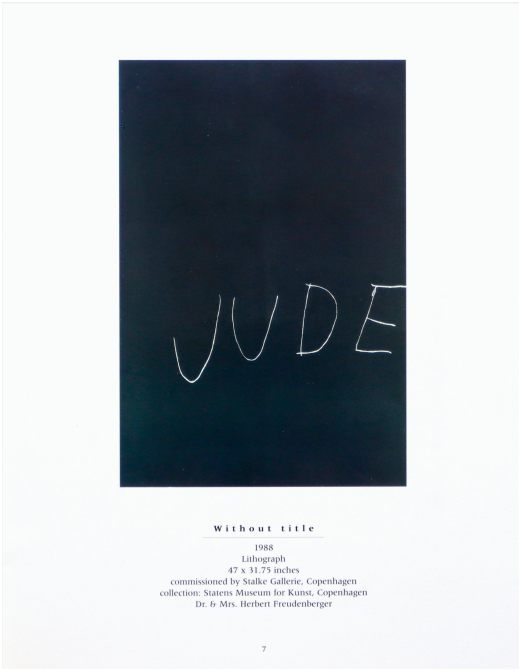
Pages: 20

Edition 2000

ISBN 87-905-04-8

The selected pages reproduced here document *Jew* by William Anastasi, produced in connection with his exhibition at Stalke Galleri in 1997. The publication includes the full essay “William Anastasi’s Painting of the Word ‘Jew’” by Thomas McEvilley, originally printed as part of the catalogue.

The reproduced pages show the original layout, typography, and sequencing of the text, reflecting the catalogue’s function as both a critical document and an extension of the work itself.



Voltaire wrote: “If it were permitted to reason consistently in religious matters, it is clear that we all ought to become Jews, because Jesus Christ our Saviour was born a Jew, lived a Jew, died a Jew, and he said expressly that he was fulfilling the Jewish religion.” If the sectarian “our Saviour” be omitted, we may, speaking in the broader social and cultural sense, put this more simply and strongly: we are all Jews. The view from this tangent offers the clearest explication for the historical persistence of anti-Semitism. Prejudice, the purest mirroring of self-loathing, can in this light be identified as both engine and fuel. And it tells why “Jew” is our most charged word. Where one ear discerns the single syllable which can conjure forth the very source of our culture, another hears an accusation wider and deeper than any in language.

Chuang Tzu cautions: “Don’t try to change the world, you’ll only make matters worse.” Israel Zangwill replies twenty-two centuries later: “Take from me the hope that I can change the future and you will send me mad”. Making a painting of the word “Jew” comes down on Zangwill’s side of the debate.

WILLIAM ANASTASI, 1987

WILLIAM ANASTASI’S PAINTING OF THE WORD “JEW”

Thomas McEvilley

In the formalist era of art, when only the visual aesthetic surface counted, words, since they were concepts, were not admissible. A word or a series of words could be used for its visual presence - as in a painting of a man sitting in a chair reading a newspaper, where it does not really matter what the words in the headline are saying; they simply texture the surface and the cognitive space with a sense of the deciphering of symbols. But words could not be used in pictures with explicit attention or focus on their conceptual meaning.

This situation began to change with early Cubist collage, and had definitively changed by the early work of Magritte. Yet even here there are strange displacements that seem to seek to avoid a confrontation with the actual meaning of the words. Magritte, for example, used language against itself, as in “This is not a pipe”, where he seems to use the word pipe in order to deny its meaning. Duchamp’s use of puns in his revolving discs was in its own way compromised; yes, he used language, but no, he did not use it for its straightforward ordinary meaning. This trend continued up into the heyday of Conceptualism, as in the on-the-wall word-objects of Lawrence Weiner, protected by crypticness from pat interpretation. This tendency is post-Modernist, or displaced-Modernist, in that it involves a distrust of language which derives from the conviction that no single meaning can exhaust any instance of the real. But in another sense it is residual Modernist in that it denies denotation because it is a form of representation.

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